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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
QUESTION OF PALESTINE
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Identical letters dated 21 February 1997 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

In my capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States members of the League of Arab States, I wish once again to inform you, on behalf of the Group, of its great concern at the attitude of Israel, the occupying Power, which, persisting in its policy, continues to take illegal measures against the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, as well as the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, inter alia by continuing with the construction of settlements. These actions, which constitute a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Rules of 1907, as well as of the many resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly, seriously endanger the peace process in the Middle East and the integrity of the accords concluded in that respect between the parties.

The Arab Group wishes in particular to draw attention to the policies and illegal measures taken by Israel in occupied East Jerusalem, aimed at Judaizing the city and changing its legal status and demographic composition. Jerusalem is of vital importance to the Arab world and the world of Islam, and is also important to the international community and the three major religions. Thus, Israel's policies and actions in Jerusalem are extremely dangerous. In this connection, the Israeli authorities have confirmed their decision to build a new

settlement to the south of East Jerusalem, specifically in the Jabal abu Ghneim region. This action is a sequel to a series of decisions taken by Israel, such as the decision to build a new settlement in the Ras al-Amud region, within the original frontiers of the municipality of East Jerusalem. In this connection, I wish to refer to the letter from the Chairman of the Group of Arab States for December 1996, which deals with the same subject (document S/1996/1047 of 17 December 1996). In addition, the Israeli authorities have kept open the tunnel located within the Haram al-Sharif, Security Council resolution 1073 (1996) on this subject notwithstanding. I would also recall that Israel has destroyed the building belonging to the Burj al-Laqlaq association, located within the Old City, where it would appear that a new Jewish settlement is to be constructed. Furthermore, Israel is continuing to deprive the Palestinian inhabitants of Jerusalem, who are the original inhabitants of the city, of their "right of residence", in the context of what appears to be an underhand campaign aimed at driving the Palestinian Arab inhabitants out of Jerusalem. Furthermore, Israel is continuing to isolate East Jerusalem from the other regions of Transjordan and to deny access to it by Palestinians, despite everything the city represents for the Palestinian people in religious, cultural, intellectual and economic terms.

The international community, including the Security Council, has taken a very firm attitude towards the above-mentioned policies and actions, which it has described as null and void, calling on Israel to put an end to them. The Group of Arab States Members of the United Nations wishes to insist on the vital importance of the issue, and requests the Security Council to take the necessary steps to induce Israel, the occupying Power, to put an end to its policies and actions, and in particular definitively to renounce any settlement activity, particularly in the Jabal abu Ghneim and Ras al-Amud region. The Group of Arab States wishes to reaffirm that any failure in this area risks having serious consequences and disastrous sequels.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under items 33, 35 and 85 of the agenda for the fifty-first session, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nasser AL-KIDWA
Permanent Observer of Palestine
to the United Nations